

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for delivering a bonus event to a gaming machine selected from a plurality of gaming machines comprising:
 - accepting wagers at first and second gaming machines in a gaming environment;
 - communicating with said first gaming machine to initiate display of a visual bonus indicator on a first display of said first gaming machine;
 - terminating the display of said visual bonus feature indicator on said first display;
 - communicating with said second gaming machine to initiate display of said visual bonus indicator on a second display of said second gaming machine;
 - animating in a bonus animation said visual bonus indicator on said second gaming machine display of said second gaming machine; and
 - awarding a bonus award to a player of said second gaming machine following display of said bonus animation.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said gaming environment is selected from the group consisting of a bank of gaming machines, a casino floor, a casino, and a geographic region.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said bonus award is selected from the group consisting of bonus credits, free plays of a wagering game, guaranteed non-losing plays of a wagering game, and prizes such as physical objects, food items, show tickets, and the like.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein initiating a display of a bonus indicator comprises overlapping a bonus indicator display on a standard gaming display.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein initiating a display of a bonus indicator comprises replacing a standard gaming display with a bonus indicator display.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein initiating a display of a bonus indicator comprises initiating a display of a bonus indicator on a secondary display area.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein communicating with said first and second gaming machines comprises communicating with said first and second gaming machines from a central gaming machine management system.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein communicating with said first and second gaming machines comprises intercommunicating between said first and second gaming machines.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein the steps are completed in the listed sequence.
10. The method of claim 1 wherein animating said visual bonus indicator comprises animating said visual bonus indicator in an interactive animation wherein said visual bonus indicator interacts with other gaming elements in said second gaming machine display.
11. A method of awarding bonus awards on two or more gaming machines comprising:
 - accepting a first wager at a first gaming machine and accepting a second wager at a second gaming machine;
 - displaying on a first display of said first gaming machine a visual bonus indicator;
 - awarding a first bonus award to a player of said first gaming machine;
 - terminating said display of said visual bonus indicator on said first display of said first gaming machine;
 - displaying on a second display of said second gaming machine said visual bonus indicator; and
 - awarding a second bonus award to a player of said second gaming machine.
12. The method of claim 11 further comprising animating in a first animation said visual bonus indicator on said first display of said first gaming machine and animating

in a second animation said visual bonus indicator on said second display of said second gaming machine.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein said first bonus award has a value less than a value of said second bonus award.

14. The method of claim 11 wherein at least one of said first bonus award and said second bonus award is a free play of the respective gaming machine.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein at least one of said first bonus award and said second bonus award is an award of credits.

16. The method of claim 11 wherein said first and second gaming machines are located proximate each other and wherein said displaying of said visual bonus indicator on said first display and said second display are coordinated to portray movement of said visual bonus indicator from said first display to said second display.

17. The method of claim 11 wherein the steps are completed in the listed sequence.

18. The method of claim 11 further comprising displaying a bonus award symbol on at least one of said first and second gaming machines.

19. The method of claim 11 wherein displaying said visual bonus indicator comprises displaying said visual bonus indicator interacting with other displayed gaming elements.

20. The method of claim 11, further comprising displaying said visual bonus indicator on a display of an idle gaming machine which is not being wagered upon.

21. A system for providing random bonus awards comprising:

a plurality of gaming machines located in a gaming environment, each of said plurality of gaming machines having thereon a display and a value input device for accepting a wager;

a visual bonus indicator controller adapted to coordinate display of a visual bonus indicator on certain ones of said displays of said gaming machines, said visual bonus indicator indicating to a player an increased likelihood of a bonus award being awarded on a gaming machine upon which it is displayed; and

a processor operative to award a bonus award in connection with certain animations of said visual bonus indicator.

22. The system of claim 21 wherein said visual bonus indicator controller is adapted to initiate a first animation of said visual bonus indicator on a first display of a first gaming machine and is further adapted to initiate a second animation of said visual bonus indicator on a second display of a second gaming machine.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein said first gaming machine is adapted to award a first bonus award to a first player substantially contemporaneously with a display of said first animation and said second gaming machine is adapted to award a second bonus award to a second player substantially contemporaneously with a display of said second animation.

24. The system of claim 21 wherein said gaming environment is selected from the group consisting of a bank of gaming devices, a casino floor, a casino, and a geographic region.

25. The system of claim 21 wherein said gaming environment is a bank of gaming machines and said plurality of gaming machines are located proximate each other, said visual bonus indicator controller being adapted to coordinate said display of said visual bonus indicator such that said visual bonus indicator appears to move among the displays of the gaming machines.

26. The system of claim 25 wherein each of said gaming machines further comprises an audio output device adapted to emit an audio bonus indicator substantially contemporaneously with display of said visual bonus indicator.

27. The system of claim 26 wherein said audio bonus indicator replaces standard audio performances of said gaming machines.

28. The system of claim 26 wherein said audio bonus indicator superimposes with standard audio performances of gaming machines.

29. The system of claim 21 wherein said visual bonus indicator is displayed sequentially on all of said gaming machines and further wherein said visual bonus indicator controller is adapted to initiate display of a bonus award symbol on certain ones of said gaming machines, said bonus award symbol indicating the receipt of a bonus award by a player.

30. The system of claim 21 wherein said visual bonus indicator is displayed substantially sequentially on said gaming machines and further wherein said visual bonus indicator controller is adapted to coordinate said substantially sequential display and to skip certain ones of said gaming machines.

31. The system of claim 21 wherein said processor is adaptive to award based on one or more player characteristics of players of said gaming machines, said player characteristics chosen from the group consisting of the number of coins per minute played, the total number of credits in the machine, and historical play data for the player.